DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 175 FL 021 900

AUTHOR Dogancay, Seran
TITLE Turkish Language Reform in a Language Planning Framework: Its Impact on Language Use of Turkish Cypriot High School Students.
PUB DATE [93]
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Applied Linguistics (1993).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; Diachronic Linguistics; Foreign Countries; High Schools; High School Students; *Language Planning; *Language Role; *Linguistic Borrowing; *Public Policy; *Turkish
IDENTIFIERS Neologism; *Turkey

ABSTRACT

Turkish language reform began as a language simplification effort by literary figures of the late 19th century, gathering momentum in the 1920s and 1930s to become a large-scale planning activity to save Turkish from domination by foreign influences. Change in script was easy due to low literacy rates, but purification of the lexicon, by stylistic simplification and lexical modernization, was always controversial. Reformers followed four strategies for finding authentic Turkish substitutes for foreign borrowings. A recent study in two Cyprus high schools investigated language usage in relation to Turkish language reform efforts and to assess results of some of the language-related educational policies. A total of 213 students from English-medium and Turkish-medium classes were surveyed and tested on their knowledge of reform-based Turkish neologisms taken from daily newspapers, and their written compositions were analyzed for language usage. In addition, teachers and administrators were interviewed about their views on teaching and using the Turkish language. Results suggest that although Turkish language reform reshaped the language, it is now a much reduced effort, little reinforced in policy implementation in general and specifically in Cypriot schools. Further language planning is recommended. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 367 175

Turkish Language Reform in a Language Planning Framework: Its Impact on Language Use of Turkish Cypriot High School Students

SERAN DOGANCAY

The paper presents a brief overview of the Turkish language reform as a language planning case and reports on a study done to examine the current impact of the reform on language policies and language use in the Turkish Cypriot context[1]. Being an area that is still almost unexplored, the impact of Turkish language reform on issues such as education policies, attitudes towards changes the reform brought into the language, people's usage of their mother tongue, and their lexical preferences, provide a broad range of questions to probe. However, within the scope of this study the focus was on the current policies on teaching Turkish as the mother tongue and the language knowledge and use of the new generations.

Turkish Language Reform and Language Planning

Language planning (LP) is commonly defined as deliberate intervention in the process of language change. LP concerns itself with a range of activities that can be examined under two broad and related categories: status planning and corpus planning, as originally labeled by Kloss (1969). Status planning focuses on the allocation of functions to varieties of language via authoritative policy making. It concerns itself with decisions regarding which language will be assigned or recognized for which purposes in a country, and the implementation of these decisions. Corpus planning, on the other hand, is concerned with the linguistic code itself, promoting changes in the linguistic structure, the script, the lexicon, styles, and so on, hence seeking to establish 'a model of the good language' (Fishman, 1982). To this status-corpus planning distinction Cooper (1989) adds 'acquisition planning' as a third focus of LP. He defines this as "increasing the number of users-speakers, writers,

[1] This paper is taken from a doctoral dissertation research done at the School of Education of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104. A complete version of the dissertation can be obtained from the University of Michigan Dissertation Services, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Tel: 313-761-4700.

FL021900

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Seran Dogancay

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

listeners, or readers" (p. 33) of a language through promoting its learning. Therefore, an expanded definition of LP as given by Cooper (1989, p. 183) is "deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure [Kloss' corpus planning], or functional allocation [Kloss' status planning] of their language codes." Government authorized language planning agencies, institutions, or even individuals can initiate LP to solve problems which, though mainly linguistic, usually involve political, national, socio-cultural, economic, and other societal issues. LP decisions are implemented through education and the mass media as the two of the most powerful means by which people can be reached.

Language planners can direct their efforts towards several goals (Nahir, 1977, 1984), one of which is language reform. Language reform is defined by Nahir as "the deliberate manipulation of language triggered by the need to facilitate language use, often through a simplification of orthography, spelling or lexicon, as well as to serve the underlying political, socio-economical, cultural and ideological tendencies of the community." (1984, p. 113). Perry (1985) adds that language reform is "primarily a sociopolitical, not a linguistic and cultural, process, though its effects remain to color the speech and literature of succeeding generations" (p. 295). Indeed, Turkish language reform which focused on simplification and Turkification of orthography and lexicon, was a sociopolitical undertaking that changed and shaped the path of the Turkish language.

Turkish Language Reform (henceforth TLR) was started as a language simplification effort by literary figures of the late eighteenth century. It gathered momentum during the initial periods of the Turkish Republic in the 1920's and 30's, to become a large-scale, governmentally-administered language planning activity which was carried out to save Turkish from the domination of foreign influences.

After the adoption of Islamic religion and through language contact with the Arab world, especially under the Ottoman Empire, Turkish was heavily influenced by Arabic and Persian and through extensive borrowing from these languages, it turned into a hybrid of Arabic, Persian and Turkish. The heavily ornate and prestigious Ottoman Turkish the rulers and the elite of the period used in their writing became incomprehensible to the masses. After the

collapse of the Empire, however, under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk, a new Turkish nation began to form, along with feelings of Turkish nationalism. The new elite wanted to develop a modern, westernized Turkish nation and they needed an authentic Turkish language to unify it. Thus, they set out to carry extensive language planning which consisted of changing the script from Arabic to Latin, and purifying and modernizing the vocabulary. These changes in the language would also aid in the movement towards the West from the Islamic Eastern world. The major LP agency was *Türk Dil Kurumu* (the TDK) 'Turkish Language Association', aided by politicians, teachers, other interested people, and supervised by Atatürk himself.

The change in the script was relatively easy due to the very low rate of literacy. The purification (Turkification) of the lexicon, however, has always been surrounded by controversy. During this purification movement, which continued until the 70s, language reformers proposed many new Turkish words to replace foreign borrowings and to create the 'pure Turkish language'. This language renovation attempt has diminished greatly in the recent decades, possibly due to the surrounding controversies and the overriding importance of other sociocultural and political events in the Turkish life.

TLR, which Fishman (1971) and Nahir (1977) label as 'a most successful' and 'a most celebrated case of extensive language reform' respectively, can be succinctly summarized in Fishman's words (1971, p.11),

> The case of Turkish language planning is justifiably well known for the speed and thoroughness with which it pursued modernization. . . . . Seeking a *new* [italics original] Turkish identity (in contrast with its old Ottoman-Islamic identity) governmentally sponsored language planning conscientiously and vigorously moved to attain script reform (Roman in place of Arabic script), to attain Europeanization of specialized nomenclatures (rather than the Arabic and Persian loan words hitherto used for learned and cultured purposes), and to attain vernacularization or simplification of vocabulary, grammar, and phraseology for everyday conversational use (discarding the little understood and ornate flourishes patterned on Arabic or Persian).

Thus, in short, TLR consisted of two undertakings: 1) the *script reform*, changing of the script from Arabic to Latin (Roman) and 2) the *language reform*, consisting of i) renovation of the language (via simplification of the style by discarding the ornate patterns of Persian and Arabic) and purification of the lexicon, and ii) modernization, especially lexical

modernization, that is, enrichment of the language and the lexicon so that it would permit the developing language to fulfill new communicative functions. The main goal was to develop a national standard which would be both authentic and modern.

The language reformers followed four major strategies in finding authentic Turkish substitutes for foreign borrowings:

1) *Derleme*: Collecting and publishing Turkish words from the spoken everyday language of the Anatolian people. For example, the Arabic *simal* 'North' and *cenup* 'South' were replaced by the spoken *kuzey* and *güney* from folk vernacular. *Alan* 'area', *çaba* 'effort', *yitirme* 'to lose', etc. replaced their Arabic counterparts. Through this process of graphization and codification of the spoken vernacular, many Turkish origin words that had been in oral use for centuries were added to the language. As these were already in the linguistic repertoire of many people, they were easily accepted and spread.

2)*Tarama*: Researching old texts from the pre-Islamic Turkish era to find words that had fallen out of use and using other Turkic languages as resources to borrow from. For example, revival of *konuk* 'guest' was revived to replace *misafir, yanit* 'answer' to replace *cevap*, *yeg* 'to prefer' to replace *tercih*., etc. In this way, many old, pre-Islamic Turkish words were revived and codified as part of the new norm. Some of these neologisms managed to replace their foreign-origin counterparts; others only managed to become synonyms for the foreign borrowings. (Note that processes 1 and 2 described above are not always mutually exclusive.)

3) *Birlestirme*: Compounding existing Turkish words to make up new ones: For example, joining together *yüz* 'one hundred' and *yil* 'year' to make *yüzyil* 'century' to replace the Arabic *asir*; compounding *bilgi* 'knowledge' and *sayar* 'the one that counts' to make *bilgisayar* that would replace the European borrowing *komptütör* 'computer'. Many of these new compounds were highly successful, especially those that replaced words which were not suited to Turkish phonology, i.e. *infrastrüktür* 'infrastructure' then replaced by *altyapi*, 'beneath+structure', some, though, such as *komputor* and *bilgisayar,* and *linguistik* and *dilbilim*, ('language+science' to mean 'linguistics') are often used interchangeably.

4) *Türetme*: Deriving new words via derivative suffixes; for instance, using the suffix *-sel /-sal* and *bilim* 'science' to make up *bilimsel* 'scientific', *toplumsal* 'societal'; or utilizing

-men /-man to make *ögretmen* 'teacher' from the verb *ögret* 'to teach', *göçmen* 'refugee', *yazman* 'clerk', *yönetmen* 'director', *elestirmen* 'critique', and so on, while making sure that these new words conform to Turkish vowel harmony.

Using these processes, and several others, countless Turkish neologisms were proposed and attempted to be implemented via newspapers and mass education. However, a major deficiency of TLR is that despite countless lexical items that were prepared and disseminated by the TDK, a formal or even informal evaluation of the fate of these neologisms has not really been attempted, except several case studies investigating the relationship between political tendencies and language use (Cüceoglu and Slobin, 1980; Sabuncuoglu, 1985). This was mainly due to the highly political and controversial nature of the undertaking. There appears to be no research done on how the products of the Turkish language reform were disseminated through formal schooling, although schools are principal agents of implementation of language planning decisions and products. Opinions of educators toward language planning decisions and products are especially important because educators are the agents responsible for implementing the desired norms in schools. Moreover, at a more pragmatic level, the study of linguistic knowledge and use of target populations can reveal the impact language planning efforts have had on the people, thus showing the rate of success. Such studies can provide valuable insights for successful language planning and consequent modification of the processes and the products. They also aid teachers and curriculum designers in analyzing the problems encountered by the students during the course of language planning and standardization. In this way, necessary modifications can be made with the aid of feedback obtained from various sources. This study was undertaken as a step towards revealing the linguistic behavior of a target group in relation to the products of the Turkish language reform, hoping to provide the beginning of a larger scale formal evaluation of the outcome of this language planning process. It also aimed to examine the Turkish language reform through several levels thus investigating the relationship between education, educational policies and LP.

Part 2: The Study

Method: Throughout the study the methods of educational surveys were used to obtain a holistic picture. Adapting a multi-level approach to look at language planning at both the upper decision-making stage and at the lower usage stage, I used the following as sources of data;

1. Policy makers: Documentary information was obtained on education and language policies from the Ministry of Education and Culture as codified products of language planning at the policy level.
2. Administrators: Interviews were carried out with inspectors of Turkish language and literature as the supervisors of implementation efforts of the above policies.
3. Teachers of Turkish language and literature in high schools: Interviews were done on what actually happens in the classrooms during the implementation of the policies, on teachers' views on Turkish and on students' language use.
4. High school seniors: Survey questionnaires and vocabulary tests were given to the actual target population to measure their awareness of some Turkish neologisms. Students' written compositions were also analyzed to see their language use patterns. The aim was to see the effect of the reform and the above policies and implementation efforts on students' language.

The data was analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistics, using the SPSS program.

Subjects : 213 students from two of the largest co-educational high schools in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, their Turkish language and literature teachers, and their inspectors participated in this study. In order to compare mother-tongue knowledge and use by students with different media of education, 97 of the students were from an English-medium school and 116 were from a Turkish-medium school. Students were surveyed via a questionnaire and tested on their knowledge of neologisms which were sampled from daily newspapers. Their written compositions were content analyzed to reveal the type of language they use. Educators were interviewed on their views on teaching and using the Turkish language. All data was coded and computerized for statistical analysis.

The criterion variables were knowledge and usage of new Turkish words, as measured by tests of Turkish and through analysis of students' writing respectively. The influence of the school attended (and thus the media of instruction), the socioeconomic level of the parents (as determined on the basis of the parents' level of education), exposure to various forms of the media (shown by student responses to survey questions), general school achievement (as indicated by the senior high school average grades), and the home location of the students (urban vs. rural), were the variables whose effect on knowledge and usage of Turkish were measured.

Results : Findings indicate that the initial impact of the Turkish language reform, as reflected in the reinforcement of purified/simplified Turkish words in education, has attenuated over the years. Policies on mother tongue education do not reinforce pure Turkish, as they had done at the beginning of the reform years. In fact, these policies are quite vague on the linguistic norm to be taught, failing to tell the teacher whether they should teach pure Turkish (Turkish purified from all the foreign rules and lexical borrowings), or simple Turkish (Turkish in which those foreign origin words which have long been adapted into the structure and phonology if the language are included).

Inspectors and teachers oppose exaggerated purism in language due to the confusion it creates for learners. They aim to teach simple Turkish to the students and they define this language as the "grammatically correct standard which is free from unnecessary foreign borrowings (that is, those borrowings from western languages, mainly English, whose Turkish equivalents are in people's lexicons), though it includes foreign-origin words which have *long* been adapted into the phonology and morphology of the language." The lessening of the effect of Turkish language reform can be related to the lack of agreement between idealist language planners who support language purism and more moderate and pragmatic educators.

Nevertheless, results of vocabulary tests reveal that students have been learning the Turkish neologisms implemented by the media. The students were tested on their understanding and ability to use Turkish neologisms which were sampled from daily newspapers. Though they know only about 50 % of the neologisms they were asked to define and use in a sentence, this result is not discouraging considering that fact that language education policies and their

teachers do not reinforce the teaching of pure Turkish in the classrooms. Overall, the students' background, that is, the education level of their parents, home location, the amount of television they watch, and their general academic achievement have the greatest influence on their knowledge of Turkish neologisms, the latter being the most important. Students of the more competitive English-medium school have better knowledge of these neologisms, despite fewer hours of formal exposure to the language, indicating that the acquisition of Turkish neologisms is not influenced so mush by the medium of education as long as the students are doing well academically. Furthermore, the linguistic analysis of the least known neologisms included in the definition test showed that knowledge (and hence acquisition) of neologisms is not dependent upon the commonness of their components, nor on their being coined grammatically.

A content analysis done on students' written compositions focusing on the origins of the lexical items used showed that the vocabulary items used by the new generations is still a hybrid of Turkish, Arabic/Persian and western languages, although comparisons with previous studies (Heyd 1950, Aksoy 1962, Imer 1976, Özdemir 1980, Landau 1990) show that the number of Turkish words in the lexicon has been increasing steadily, no doubt due to the language reform[2].

Conclusion

As a result of the literature search and the findings of this study it can be said that although the Turkish language reform managed to reshape the Turkish language, thus fulfilling many of the goals of the language reformers, it is now a much reduced effort. Language education policies do not reinforce pure Turkish. In fact these policies are quite vague on the style of language (especially the type of vocabulary) to be taught, failing to tell the teacher whether they should aim to use pure or simple Turkish. New generations acquire some of the Turkish neologisms proposed by the language reformers. Yet even those who

[2] The statistical details of the study can be obtained from the author by writing to Seran Dogancay, Bogaziçi Universitesi, Egitim Fakültesi, Yabanci Diller Egitimi Bölümü, 80815 Bebek, Istanbul, Turkey.

know more of pure Turkish words do not use them more often in their writing. Turkish, Arabic/Persian and Western origin words co-occur freely in the style of Turkish favored by the youth, though the rate of Arabic/Persian words has decreased greatly due to the reform.

These findings show that the impact of the reform on language education policies in the Turkish Cypriot context is not so evident. Perhaps this is a reflection of the lessening of the influence of the TLR due to conservative governments and educators who oppose exaggerated language purism and the lack of agreement between radical language planners and moderate, pragmatic educators. Though academics and some linguists are still coining terminologies to help them in their teaching and writing, the Turkish Language Association is not actively coining pure Turkish words any more. So, though the TLR was a successful language planning attempt which greatly rescued the Turkish language from the domination of foreign rules and many borrowings, it has been losing its impact on language education as new borrowings are taken from western languages. Perhaps it is time once again for language planners to resume their work in order to prevent the entrance of more foreign words into Turkish, this time from western languages, before these start to threaten the authenticity of the language and reverse what has been achieved by the language reform. This study shows that although initially it was very successful, the Turkish language reform movement has somewhat lost its impetus. Though many words coined during the reform are now well entrenched in the language, learners have problems with certain lexical items and grammar rules, necessitating further language planning.

References

Aksoy, Ö. A. 1967. *Özlesen Dilimiz* [Our purifying tongue]. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu.

Cooper, R. 1989. *Language Planning and Social Change.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Cüceoglu, D.and Slobin, D. 1980. Effects of Turkish language reform on person perception. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 11/3: 297-326.

Dogancay, S. 1993. Turkish Language Reform in a Language Planning Framework: Its Impact on Language Use of Turkish Cypriot Students. University of Pennsylvania Doctoral

Dissertation. UMI - University Microfilms International.

Fishman, J. A. 1971. The impact of nationalism on language planning. In J. Rubin and B. Jernudd (eds.), *Can Language be Planned ?*(pp. 3-20). Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.

Fishman, J.A. 1982. Sociolinguistic foundations of bilingual education. *Bilingual Review*, IX/1:1-35.

Heyd, U. 1954. *Language Reform in Modern Turkey*. Jerusalem: Israel Orientalini Society.

Imer, K. 1976. *Türk Dil Devrimi* [Turkish language reform]. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu.

Kloss, H. 1969. Research possibilities on group bilingualism: A Report. Quebec: International Center for Research on Bilingualism.

Landau, J. M. 1990. Language policy and political development in Israel and Turkey. In B.Weinstein (ed.), *Language Policy and Political Development* (pp. 133-149). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publications.

Nahir, M. 1977. The five aspects of language planning. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 1/2:107-122.

Nahir, M. 1984. Language planning goals: A classification. Ibid. 8/3: 294-327.

Özdemir, E. 1969/1980. *Dil Devrimiz* [Our language reform]. Ankara: Ankara Universitesi Basimevi.

Perry, J. R. 1985. Language reform in Turkey and Iran. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 17 (August): 295-311.

Sabuncuoglu, M. F. 1985. The Turkish language reform and national development in Turkey. Doctoral Dissertation, UC Berkeley. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 47/03A. (University Microfilms No. AAC8610194).